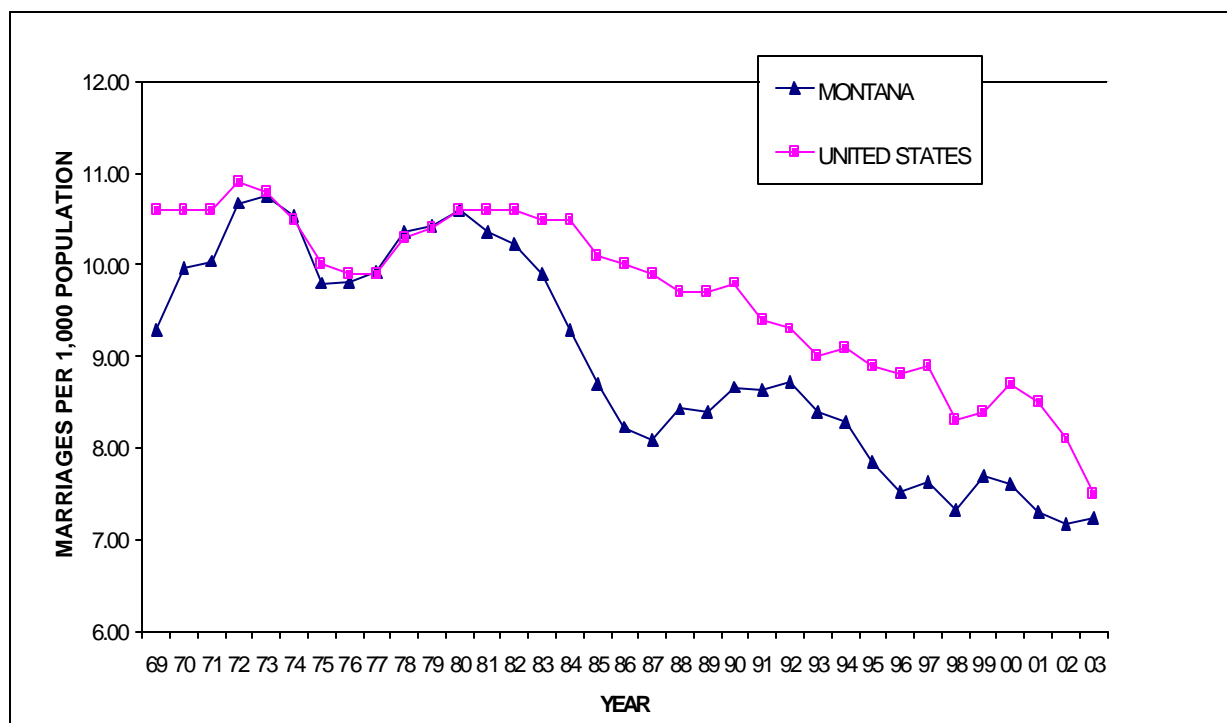


MARRIAGE

There were 6,640 marriages solemnized in Montana in 2003, with the rate per 1,000 population only slightly increased from the previous year's rate. Except for a brief resurgence in Montana's rate between 1988 and 1992, the trends in marriage rates for both Montana and the United States have been in long-term decline since 1980 (see **Figure 63**).

Figure 63

MARRIAGE RATES MONTANA AND THE UNITED STATES, 1969-2003*



* Data for the United States in 2002 and 2003 are preliminary.

Table M-1 shows the frequency of marriage by month in the year 2003. The summer and fall months (June through September) have been the most popular times for marriage.

The ages of brides and grooms, by age groups and prior marital status, are shown in **Table M-2**. More than three-fifths of the brides (62.6%) and grooms (64.2%) married for the first time in 2003.

Just over half (53.0 %) of all marriages performed in Montana in 2003 were first marriages for both the bride and the groom. The frequency of such marriages is shown in **Table M-3** by age group of bride and groom. Median ages of brides and grooms for the previous ten years are shown in **Table M-4**. The median age for first-

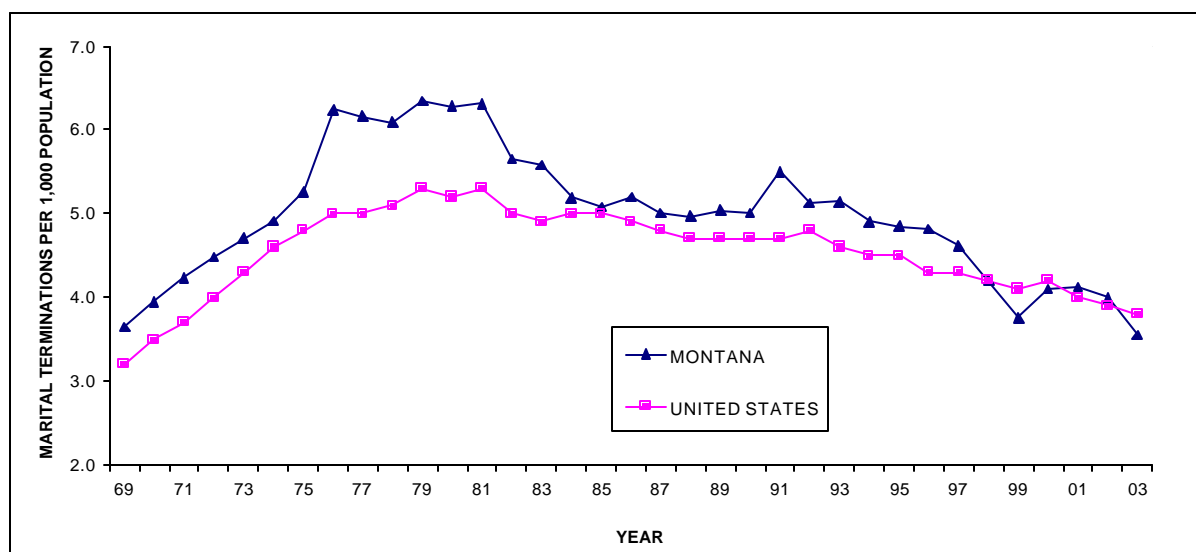
time brides in 2003 was 24 years and that of first-time grooms was 26.

MARITAL TERMINATION

In October of 1998, the Judicial Case Management System (JCMS) assumed responsibility for the collection of marital termination records (marital dissolutions and invalid marriages). The records from 1998 through 2003 are not strictly comparable to those collected by the Office of Vital Statistics (OVS). However, it can be seen that the trend in marital termination for Montana was roughly parallel to the national trend from 1967 through 1997, as **Figure 64** shows, although the Montana rates were consistently higher up to the time JCMS assumed data collection.

Figure 64

MARITAL TERMINATION RATES



MONTANA AND THE UNITED STATES, 1969-2003*

* Montana data were collected by the Montana Office of Vital Statistics (OVS) through September 1998 and by the Judicial Case Management System (JCMS) thereafter. Data collected by JCMS are not comparable to those collected by OVS and should be used with caution. Data for the United States in 2002 and 2003 are preliminary.

Montana's rate of marital termination per 1,000 population is shown in **Table S-5**. During the last 20 years that OVS collected the data, this rate decreased from a high of 6.5 in 1979 to 4.6 in 1997. As stated above, rates calculated for subsequent years are not comparable.